

Response to Examiner's Remarks in Detailed Action

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested. The Application stands rejected as to all claims pending prior to this Amendment, on the basis of Miller, U.S. Patent 2,201,372 ("Miller"). In her Advisory Action, the Examiner indicated that the limitation of transference of forces directly to the bell would require additional consideration. Applicant respectfully disagrees because the language of the claim would have been interpreted to mean transfer occurs directly. Nevertheless, the Applicant requests that the Examiner accept this new submission under the rules of the RCE practice, and requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejections to the claims as amended, and accept the newly added claim related to the same invention. The Applicant anticipates seeking a formal interview in person with the Examiner following entry of the RCE.

Applicant hereby requests an extension of time of three months, and encloses herewith full payment for such an extension. The undersigned authorizes the charge of any underpayment of the fees therefor to Deposit Account 50-0954.

Claims 3 and 11 remain in this application. Claims 1, 2, and 4-10, and 12-16 have been previously cancelled (without prejudice to file a divisional application). Applicant respectfully requests these cancellations be entered. Claim 17 is newly added.

Claim Rejections, § 102 & 103

Examiner's interpretation of "within". The Examiner rejected a number of the claims on the basis of an interpretation of the term "within" as meaning "within the extrapolated boundaries of", because of the drawings. These rejections are now moot because (1) the drawing issues causing the Examiner to adopt this interpretation have been resolved, and (2) no claims now refer to a lip "within" the bell.

Re: Claim 2, 4-10, and 12-16: Claims 2, 4-10 and 12-16 are cancelled, without prejudice to Applicant's right to file a divisional application. Dependent claim 11 is now revised to depend from Claim 3. The rejections levied against these claims are therefore moot.

Re: Claim 3:

The Examiner rejected Claim 3 over Miller, as well as over Miller in combination with Harper and separately in combination with Figure 1. Applicant has amended Claim 3, which now specifically indicates that (1) a portion of the extractive load is made directly to the bell, not by transition through the bolts, (2) the segment bites into the bell, rather than merely contacting the bell, and (3) the location of biting into the bell is at a surface of the bell which is parallel to the bell's axis.

The Applicant's claim 3 as amended specifically refers to transfer of force from the segment directly to the bell. As previously noted in Applicant's arguments filed February 10, 2004, support for the limitation of transfer of force directly to the bell is found in Claim 3 as filed, and in the Specification at Paragraphs 5 and 9 of the Detailed Description. Of the cited prior art, neither Harper nor Figure 1 discloses a locking segment. The Examiner suggests in her Advisory Action that Miller figure 1 allows for the transfer of a portion of extractive force directly to the bell. Applicant respectfully disagrees, noting that the Examiner shows only "contact" between Miller's bell and Miller's segment, which contact alone does not demonstrate or imply an ability for the bell to bear a load in the extractive direction at that location. Specifically, in Miller's figure 1, forces in the extractive direction would push the segment away from the bell. Only forces in the insertion direction bear on the bell in Miller, but such forces are not contemplated by the claim, and

The Applicant's amended claim 3 further recites that the segment bites into the bell (supported at Specification p. 14, line 10; p. 15, lines 1-2, among others), in contrast to the mere contact relied upon by the examiner. Applicant's revised claim also refers to the location of transfer of forces to the bell, which occurs at a bell surface that is substantially parallel to the axis of the bell. This limitation is supported by p. 15, lines 26-28 viewed in connection with Figures 4 and 7 of the application as filed.

Finally, Applicant notes that claim 3 requires that force be transferred to a compression gland. Miller does not employ a compression gland in Figures 1 - 15, and therefore these figures cannot meet this limitation. While Miller figure 16 does show a compression gland, nothing in figure 16 suggests or supports the conclusion that extractive force is transferred directly to the bell, as opposed to through the snap ring shown. Nothing in Harper or Figure 1 suggests this transfer of force.

Re: Claim 11:

Claim 11 is not new, but its dependency is amended to rely on Claim 3. Applicant also revises the wording as shown on page 2 of this paper for clarity to specify that the multiple density regions are in the gasket. These amendments were previously submitted in applicant's paper dated February 10, 2004, but not entered. Applicant requests that they be entered in connection with this Submission.

New Claim 17: Applicant adds new claim 17. In contrast to Miller, new claim 17 refers to a single angle between the locking segment and the spigot (as shown in Figures 1 and 4 of Applicant's specification), which faces the extractive direction. Miller, by contrast and as noted by the Examiner, supports its segment both at a leading point and at the rear of the segment, forming multiple angles with the spigot. Additionally, Applicant's claim 17 also recites that the location of contact between the segment and the gland occurs at a location not adjacent the spigot. This limitation is supported by the specification at page 12, lines 3-6

§ 112 Issues

The Examiner objected to Claims 2, 4-11, and 16 because it was unclear to the Examiner from Figures 1-6 how the lip of the gland was partially within the female pipe portion. Applicant's paper filed February 10, 2004 noted that the lip is shown within the gland in Figure 7 as filed. Applicant also attached proposed drawing corrections. (1) The Examiner accepted the drawings, now obviating this rejection, and (2) no claims now pending refer to the lip within the bell. Applicant requests that the drawing corrections as filed on February 10, 2004, a copy of which is also attached hereto, be entered.

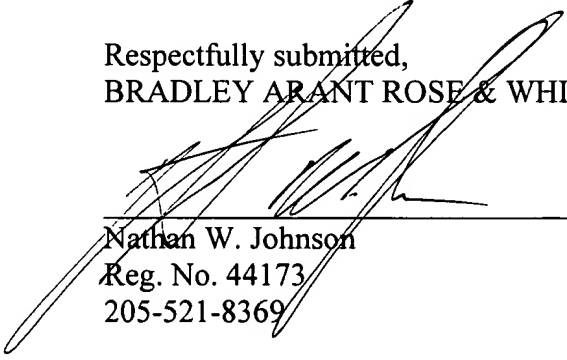
Appl. No. 09/590,586
Response Dated May 7, 2004
Reply to Office Action of 11/10/03

Fees

An extension of three months is hereby requested. Fees are authorized to be charged against Deposit Account 50-0954.

Applicant has diligently sought to comply with all requirements and to correct all informalities and objections. The Application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and a timely Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
BRADLEY ARANT ROSE & WHITE LLP



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205-521-8369

ATTACHMENTS – Certificate of Mailing & Deposit Account Authorization
RCE

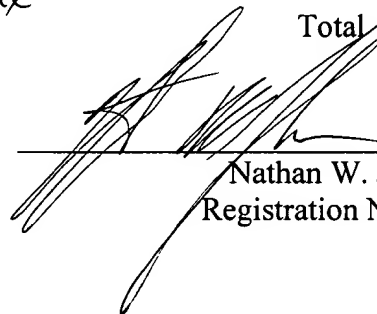
CERTIFICATE OF EXPRESS MAILING

I hereby certify that the items detailed below are being deposited with the United States Postal Service as Express Mail, Post Office to Addressee, to the following address:

Mail Stop RCE
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On May 7, 2004, to the attention of Melody M. Burch.

2. Cover Letter	2 p.
3. Request for RCE	1 p.
4. Submission to Office Action	
Cover/Index	1 p.
Amendment First Page	1 p.
Claims Listing	2 p.
Drawings Remarks	1 p.
Remarks/Argument	4 p.
This Page	1 p.
<i>Drawing Appendix</i>	4 p.
Total	16 pages

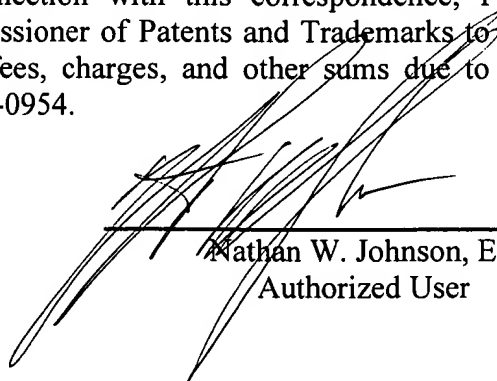


Nathan W. Johnson
Registration No. 44,173

Date: May 7, 2004

AUTHORIZATION TO CHARGE
DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

If, after processing the enclosed checks, any charges, fees, or sums due remain unpaid in connection with this correspondence, I hereby authorize the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks to charge all such remaining fees, charges, and other sums due to Deposit Account Number 50-0954.



Nathan W. Johnson, Esq.
Authorized User

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Appendix

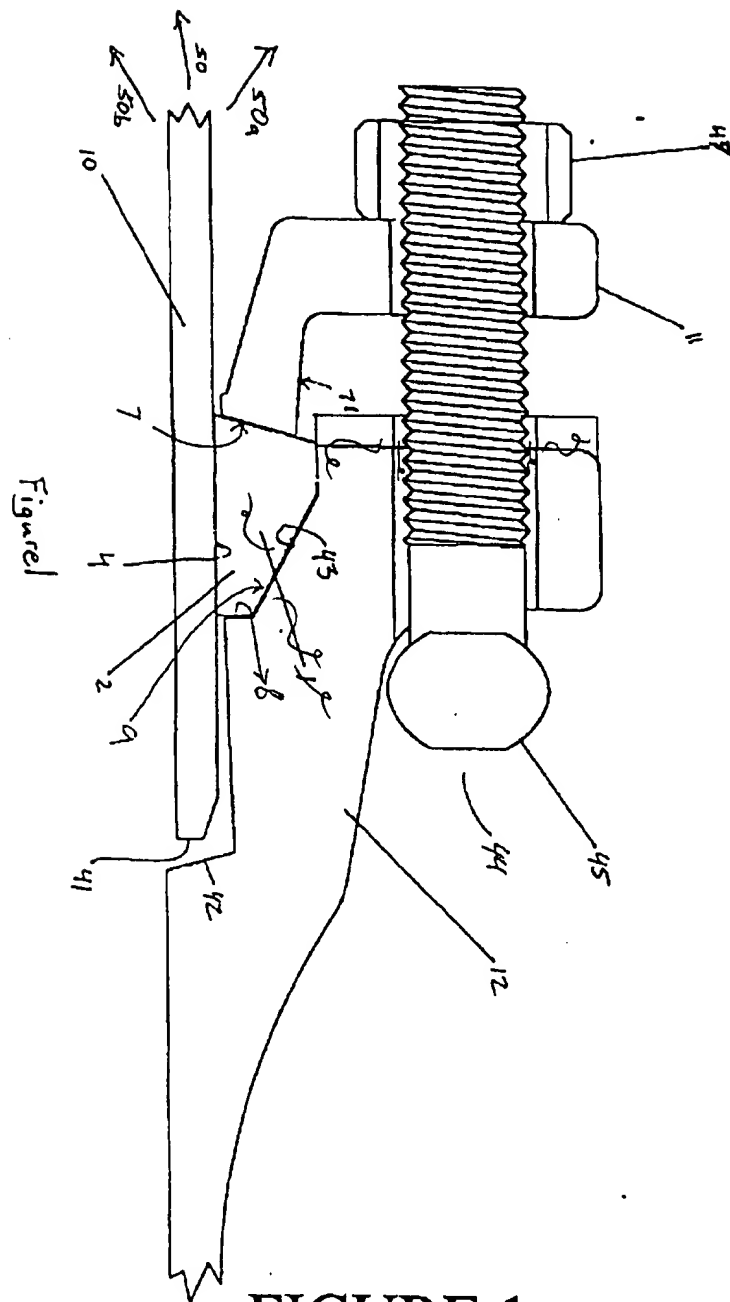


FIGURE 1

PRIOR ART

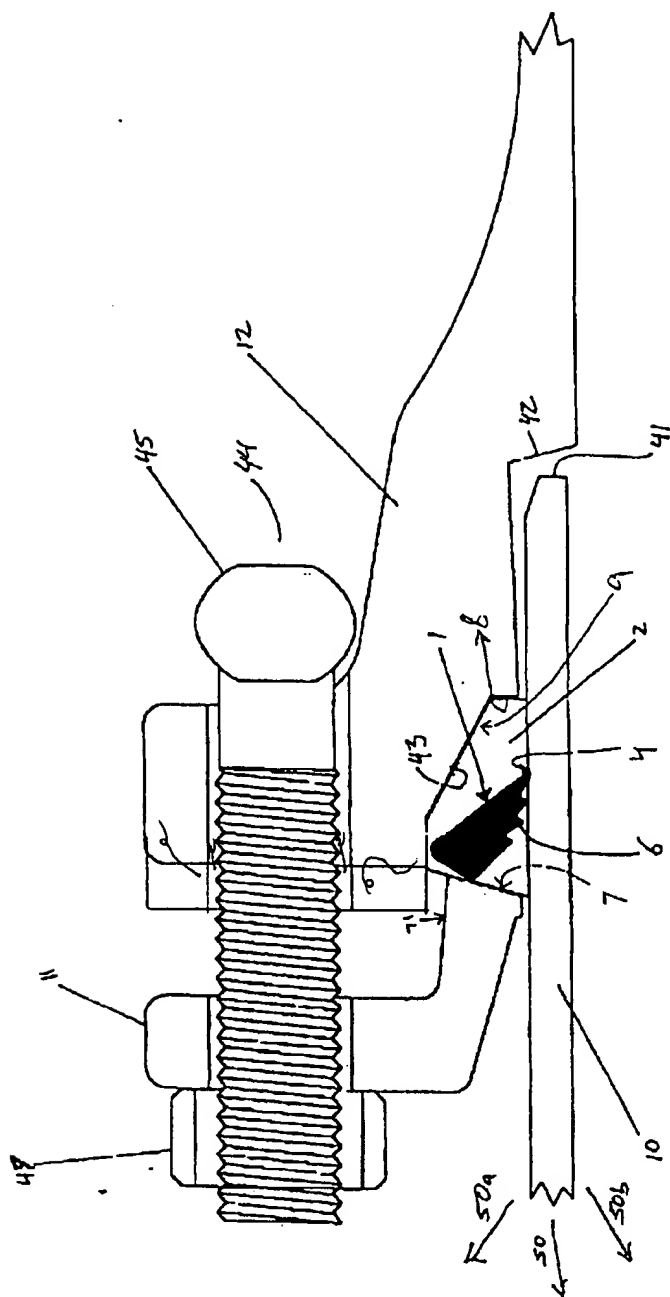


FIGURE 4